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EXAMINER

WIEKER, AMANDA FLYNN

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3743

DATE MAILED: 04/19/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-2, 4-5, 8 and 10-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Number 5,817,041 to Bader in view of U.S. Patent Number 4,641,639 to Padilla.

Bader discloses a leg support system comprising a weight-bearing support cuff (2, 3) adapted to fit around a user's lower leg below the knee, and support members (9) extending down from said support cuff, said support members having a length adapted for engaging a supporting surface when the user transfers weight onto the user's leg whereby said support members transfer weight bearing of the user to said support cuff, each support member having an extension portion extending from a foot portion, said foot portion of each support member being positioned in a spaced relationship and below the foot of the user to inhibit the foot of the user from contacting the supporting surface. Each support member has an arcuate lower surface at its foot portion (8, 11, 22) for facilitating pivoting of said support members on a supporting surface to approximate a natural walking motion. Bader discloses a plurality of straps (14) for securing said support cuff and said support members to the user's leg. The support cuff includes a pair of raised upper side portions such that a front edge (27) of said support cuff extends up and around a patellar region of the user from beneath the patellar region of the user for preventing displacement of a patella of the user during use. The support cuff (2, 3) tapers to

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conform (at 24, for example) to a shape of a user's leg tapering in the direction from a lower calf portion toward an ankle region of the user. The system further comprises a pair of cuff straps (14) extending around the support cuff for facilitating securing of said support cuff to the user to prevent slippage of the support cuff during use. Bader discloses that each support member have an extension portion extending from a foot portion, but Bader does not specify that the extension portion extends at an angle, in front of the lateral malleolus of the user.

Padilla discloses a leg support system to transfer weight away from a user's foot and onto the user's leg, comprising two support members extending from the foot, along the sides of the user's leg. Padilla specifies that the support members (36, 38) extend at an angle up the leg, and in front of the lateral malleolus of the user (see Figure 2), to achieve equal weight transfer, and to ensure that forces placed on the foot by walking or standing are effectively directed away from the user's foot (see column 4).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to have provided the leg support system disclosed by Bader, wherein the extension portions of the support members extend at an angle from the foot portion in front of the lateral malleolus of the user, as taught by Padilla, to achieve equal weight transfer, and to ensure that forces placed on the foot by walking or standing are effectively directed away from the user's foot.

3. Claims 3, 6-7 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bader in view of Padilla and in view of U.S. Patent Number 3,805,773 to Sichau.

Bader in view of Padilla disclose the previously described leg support system having a support cuff positioned below the knee, and two support members extending from said support cuff towards a supporting surface to engage said supporting surface. The lower surfaces of the support members are adapted to contact the supporting surface when in use, though Bader

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does not specify that the lower surfaces be provided with a rubber covering. Further, Bader does not specify that the length that each support members extends from the cuff be adjustable.

Sichau discloses a leg support system comprising a weight-bearing support cuff (100) adapted to fit around a user's lower leg below the knee, and support members (linked combination of 101, 88, 80, 54) extending down from said support cuff, said support members having a length adapted for engaging a supporting surface (via 60) when the user transfers weight onto the user's leg whereby said support members transfer weight bearing of the user to said support cuff. The length that each support member extends below said support cuff is adjustable to accommodate different users. Each support member includes a screw slot (89) for coupling said support member to the support cuff, via a plurality of screws (103) which are adjustably engageable to a respective one of said support members by tightening the screw at a selectable position within a respective one of said screw slots, whereby the length each support member extends below said support cuff can be adjusted. Sichau specifies that the supporting surface contacting area of the support members be covered with a rubber sole, to allow use of the system with or without a conventional shoe.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to have provided the leg support system as disclosed by Bader in view of Padilla, wherein the support surface contacting area of the support members includes a rubber covering, as taught by Sichau, to allow use of the system with or without a conventional shoe, and wherein the length of the support members be adjustable, as also taught by Sichau, to accommodate different users.

4. Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bader in view of Padilla and in view of U.S. Patent Number 5,605,535 to Lepage.

Bader in view of Padilla disclose the previously described leg support system having a support cuff positioned below the knee, and two support members extending from said support cuff towards a supporting surface to engage said supporting surface. Bader discloses a plurality of support straps (14) that secure the support cuff to the user's leg, but does not specify support straps to secure the support members to the user's leg.

Lepage discloses a leg support system comprising a support cuff (44) adapted to fit around a user's leg below the knee, and support members (22a, 22b) extending from said support cuff and having a length for engaging a supporting surface when the user transfers weight onto the user's leg whereby said support members transfer weight bearing of the user to said support cuff. Lepage discloses support straps (30, 31, 42, 28, 29) that secure both the support cuff and the support members to the user's leg, to provide a comfortable securement of the leg support system to the user's leg.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to have provided the leg support system as disclosed by Bader in view of Padilla, wherein the support members are secured to the leg by straps, as taught by Lepage, to provide a comfortable securement of the entire leg support system to the user's leg.

5. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bader in view of Padilla and Sichau and in view of Lepage.

Bader in view of Padilla and Sichau disclose the previously described leg support system having a support cuff positioned below the knee, and two support members extending from said support cuff towards a supporting surface to engage said supporting surface, wherein the support members extend in front of the user's lateral malleolus, as discussed in Paragraph 3 above. The lower surfaces of the support members are provided with a rubber covering, and the

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length that each support member extends from the cuff is adjustable. Bader does not specify support straps to secure the support members to the user's leg.

Lepage discloses a leg support system comprising a support cuff (44) adapted to fit around a user's leg below the knee, and support members (22a, 22b) extending from said support cuff and having a length for engaging a supporting surface when the user transfers weight onto the user's leg whereby said support members transfer weight bearing of the user to said support cuff. Lepage discloses support straps (30, 31, 42, 28, 29) that secure both the support cuff and the support members to the user's leg, to provide a comfortable securement of the leg support system to the user's leg.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to have provided the leg support system as disclosed by Bader in view of Padilla and Sichau, wherein the support members are secured to the leg by straps, as taught by Lepage, to provide a comfortable securement of the entire leg support system to the user's leg.

Response to Arguments

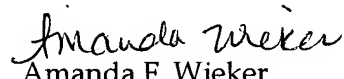
6. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-13 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Amanda F. Wieker whose telephone number is 571-272-4794. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday, 7:30 - 5:00 and alternate Fridays.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Henry Bennett can be reached on 571-272-4791. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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